

Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series

Paula Fidler interview

Conducted by James Newberry

October 10, 2017

Transcribed by Rebecca Ruggles

Paula Fidler was in business school when she got a job as a stenographer for Air Materiel Command at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. She was eventually transferred to a temporary top-secret position in St. Louis, where she worked in a vault taking shorthand for military officials who worked on the Manhattan Project to develop the atomic bomb. She recorded her oral history interview at Kennesaw State University in April 2017.

Full Transcript

Interviewer: This is James Newberry and I am here with Paula Fidler on Monday April 10, 2017 at Sturgis Library at Kennesaw State University. And Miss Fidler do you agree to this interview?

Fidler: Yes.

Interviewer: Thank you so much and thank you for sitting down with me, so we'll just start at the beginning. Could you tell me your full name?

Fidler: My full name is Paula Marcelle Tate Fidler.

Interviewer: And what's your birthday?

Fidler: 7/11/26.

Interviewer: And where were you born?

Fidler: Pardon?

Interviewer: Where were you born?

Fidler: I was born in Uhrichsville, Ohio.

Interviewer: Okay, you didn't grow up there?

Fidler: No. I grew up in a small town called New Hagerstown unincorporated. There were like maybe eighty people in the town, but it had been a larger town but when the railroad came through it bypassed us and—So we got cut out and lost all our things—. We had churches and academies and things like that. Just a small town—just all people mostly.

Interviewer: And we were talking about this earlier, but what was the nearest big town?

Fidler: Well the nearest big town I suppose was Akron, Ohio. That for me was the biggest as far as commercial.

Interviewer: Okay, and what were your parents' names?

Fidler: My mother's name was Maudeline Price Tate and my father's name was Claire Swineherd (?) Tate.

Interviewer: And what did they do for a living?

Fidler: My dad worked for the WPA during the depression and then he worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad the rest of his life.

Interviewer: What sort of work did he do for the WPA?

Fidler: Well they were building dams—.A dam. That was one of the WPA's projects in area. They built a couple of them. I'm not exactly sure what he did, but I suppose they were like construction workers in this day and age. And my mother was a homemaker and then she worked for the telephone company and then she worked for the school system and she was a—. The town nurse, so to speak, not that she was trained as a nurse, but she—. My family was a—. My grandmother lived right across the street from me, and she had the cows and the chickens and the pigs. And I learned to milk a cow and to feed the chickens and to feed the pigs and slop the hogs and do all of that from her. And that's what we did. I mean that's how I grew up in the country, and I enjoyed it. She worked—. She would— well at our house you never knew who was going to be living at our house. Like the town, well I'm going to call him the town drunk, and he got hurt in an accident—. In a tree accident when they were cutting down trees. He ended up at our house. My mother taking care of him because he didn't have any other family. He was a bachelor. And one of my cousins was born at our house. And then we had a woman that lived there who had no family and she was old, and my mother was taking care of her. So, like I said, you never knew—. And my sister was seven - I had one sister and a half years older - than I was so we grew up not really together because she went over to my grandparents who lived in another little town called Leesville which had its own school and she went over and lived with them when she got into the extracurricular activities at school. She was there but, like I said, she was seven and a half years older than—. So, I grew up and I was like spoiled. Rotten. [laughs]

Interviewer: So, it was the two of you? Your sister and you?

Fidler: Yeah, that's all.

Interviewer: So how was your family impacted by the depression?

Fidler: Well, like I said, my dad worked for the WPA and my mother worked—she went over into the little town in Leesville which had like maybe three hundred to four hundred people in it. And when they were building the dam she went over there and opened a restaurant to feed the people, the men that were coming to work on the dam project because they were all staying in local homes, you know the men, they were renting rooms, so they could work because they came from all around. She went over there—. Well in fact we moved jus—. We never left the house that we were in in New Hagerstown, but we moved to Leesville and she opened a restaurant. So, I got to work in a restaurant, and I remember they had slot machines. [laughs] I used to like to play the slot machines. Well I was like in the third grade, I think. So, that's what she did. We moved there, but we were only there until the dam was finished and then we went back to New Hagerstown and I was there the rest of the time for until I graduated from high school. Then that's when—. Well, like I said, she ran the restaurant and I helped in the restaurant to feed the people.

Interviewer: When you said your house wasn't electrified until you were eight or so?

Fidler: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you remember how that changed the household?

Fidler: Well it did pretty good because [laughs] when you don't have electricity—. We had an outhouse and we had kerosene lamps and when the electricity came through we could then have—. You had to stoke your own furnace or if you had a furnace or if you had stoves. We had individual coal stoves because that's a coal area and they burned wood also, but then when electricity came through, we could have furnaces and bathrooms and I can remember that. It made a difference. I mean the way you—. We just added on to the family—because before that when you had water, we had pumps. You know in the house we had a pump that went from a well that we had. It wasn't bad. I survived. [laughs]

Interviewer: Okay, so where did you attend school?

Fidler: I attended school in Bowerston, Ohio and in Leesville for one year just for one year in Leesville. That was when we moved there to run the, well maybe two years, I guess, I was in Leesville, when we ran the—. When my mother ran the restaurant. But Bowerston, Ohio and that's where I graduated from.

Interviewer: And what kind of student were you?

Fidler: Average. I wasn't any genius or anything like that. Of course, we had—. I rode a school bus but now a lot of kids rode school buses. The thing that I guess I remember about school was that we had one building and it had twelve grades in it. That's not very big school. My graduating class had like, I think, thirteen kids. That was all. Yeah and we didn't have a very big athletic program. I mean I did

everything. I played basketball and I did the high jumps for the outside places and I did everything that they had going. And then in the—. We had an orchestra school and a school band and in orchestra I played the violin, and, in the band, I played the drums. So, you do whatever needs done, you know? That's the way I looked at it.

Interviewer: So, when you were in high school there was a war going on?

Fidler: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, so I want to sort of jump to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Fidler: I remember exactly where I was. My cousin and her parents, Lori Jane and her parents and myself they had got me they came and got me and took Lori Jane and me to the movie down in New Philadelphia. And when we came out of the movie was when we heard - they was in all the streets - that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. And that from there, let's see that was in '41 that was three years—I graduated in '44.

Interviewer: So—.

Fidler: We did things—. We had—. No they cut us down to you can only buy so much sugar and so much flour. What did they call that? I forget.

Interviewer: Rations.

Fidler: Rations. Well we went through that. I remember that. Well I remember we did whatever had to be done.

Interviewer: So, your mother was running that restaurant?

Fidler: Well that was before the war because that was when I was like eight years old and at the time that I was in school, high school, was—. Well I must have been a freshman in high school or sophomore and my mother was then working for the telephone company. A telephone operator because that was different than the kind you have now. New people wouldn't know what I was talking about. [laughs] So we did, my dad, had ration cards. He had to drive—. He was working for the railroad by then. He had gas rationing and we only had one car. So, we did a lot of walking and I sometimes had to walk from my house to Bowerston for athletic events that we had and unless you could get a ride with somebody else. We did the—. One thing that I remember was down in Dennison which was right next to Uhrichs was a big train station. This was when I was almost out of school. They had the troops trains used to come through, and we would go down and get the troops coffee and donuts and what have you. It was like the USO today and I guess maybe it was part of the USO. My childhood was good. I can't complain.

I'm sure I complained, but, like I said, I had a chance to have both the rural and the town.

Interviewer: Well, I want to ask about the way your high school changed during the war. Did many of the older boys get drafted?

Fidler: Yes. Well my grandmother, like I said, who lived across the street from me, she used to take boys from the orphans' home and raised them, her husband my grandfather, that grandfather, was dead before I was born because he was like twenty years older than my grandmother. So, she didn't have anybody but herself to live with her. So she used to take boys from the orphan's home and keep them from the time that they were like in the eighth grade until they graduated from high school. And I can remember seven of them, and I remember the last one that she had was George. Was two years older than I was and he got drafted in the Navy. Joined the Navy and he was home between the time that he was drafted when he first met with them until he was due to go to the Lake Erie for his duty station. He was home and we—. He and another friend of mine, of ours, a school friend lived in that town too. And we were out in my dad's fishing boat on a trip in the lake or the lake in the dam that my dad helped build. And he had a fishing boat and the three of us, George, Jim, and myself, we were out in that, and another boat came up and swamped us and George drowned. And that was in '42-'43, '43 I guess, maybe. He knew how to swim, but he had been working in the fields and had a terrific sunburn and they said that's what caused him to drown. Well it was in May, and it was the water, the water in Ohio in May is cold, and, like I said, he had been working in the field and he had blisters all over his back. Anyway, I had a hold of him, and he knew how to swim, but it was too much—. It caused— he didn't really drown— him to have a heart attack and that's what killed him was that. And that was the last one she had. All the rest of them were— well one of them was a cousin, I guess it was. Anyway, my growing up I had it better a lot of the people because I got to travel because my dad worked for the railroad. We got passes and my grandparents, one set of grandparents, had moved to California, so we used to get on the train and go to California. It'd take us like five days to get there and most of the other people around there didn't get, kids my age, didn't get to go, so I was fortunate.

Interviewer: How did the passes work?

Fidler: The passes worked—. It didn't cost us anything and we got to go—. We didn't have—. All we had was coaches. We had to sit up. I remember one time during the war we went one year, I don't remember what year it was, could have been '41 must have been '42 or '43, we rode in the train and it was full of troops and I sat in the aisle most of the way. We would go, well we would go different routes, but we would go to like Chicago and then you would change trains and then you'd get a train in Chicago and then you would to maybe Kansas City and then you would change trains and then you would go—. I don't remember, but my grandparents lived in Stockton, California. We would go to there.

Interviewer: Why did they move to Stockton?

Fidler: Well I had an uncle that went out there and homesteaded a whole lot of years before that, and then he went back, and they went out to be with him. Well his wife was my grandfather's sister. My one grandfather's sister. One of my great grandfathers was one of the founders of the state of Ohio. Thomas Bryce. That was my grandfather (indecipherable 00:20:56) Bryce.

Interviewer: So, these trips you were making to California, was that during the war?

Fidler: Oh yeah. That was during the war. We went almost every year.

Interviewer: So, the war didn't necessarily stop your mobility you were still able to—.

Fidler: No, we were fortunate as I said. We had gas rationing because my dad—well he never went with me. It just my mother and my sister and myself were the ones that went. You'd have to be a traveler which most of the people didn't in that area yet didn't travel very far. That's why I said I was very fortunate that I got to go because like there again the people that lived around there, they most of them were farmers because there was no business there. They were just farmers and they didn't go travel very far. About as far as they'd travel was to the county fair.

Interviewer: Well I want to talk about your graduation. What did you expect to do after you finished high school?

Fidler: Well I had put in an app—, another girl and myself, one of my classmates and myself had put into a school in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania for nursing. That's what I had thought about doing, but they came and recruited people for government jobs. Secretarial and filing which I guess they needed because they opened up all these—. It'd be like contract people. They came and recruited from the schools for us they would pay us to go to a business university or that's the bunch that I relate to. And that ended up what I did. I joined up with one of those and they gave us a—. Well I think it was maybe like three months—. They sent us off to a business university. They called it a business school. Business university in Finley, Ohio and we did typing and shorthand and that kind of stuff for eight hours a day. And we lived in families, they like rented us a room. And after we finished that—. Well this was after I had graduated right after I had graduated from high school. And after you graduated from the business university, some of them went to Washington and I chose to go to Dayton, Ohio where the Air Material Command and Wright-Patterson field was. Because I could [laughs] could still get a pass on the railroad. That was my means of transportation. I went to Dayton and I went to Air Material Command and I had a job as a secretary.

Interviewer: What is Air Material Command?

Fidler: Well it was the—. What do you call it? There they did all the contracts for buying all the stuff for the airplanes. Well air material. That's what they did. We did well all business contracts and—for the government. I mean it was run by the government and I worked for two or three different—. And we affiliated with Wright Patterson Airfield. For the things that they needed for their airplanes we were contracting for and buying, and you know that type of thing.

Interviewer: Was it only Wright-Patterson Airfield or was it other air—?

Fidler: I don't know because I was so far down on the command. All I was doing was shorthand and typing and it was paperwork. That's what it was. Paperwork. And there was from my school and I can only speak for my bunch, but they recruited well thousands of kids and ones that I knew were from Michigan. Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. It was one of the places a whole bunch of the girls that I knew. We went and we lived—. They put us up in dormitories there right across the railroad tracks from Air Materials Command there in—. Well I think it was called—. Well it wasn't Dayton. It wasn't the city of Dayton. I think it was Fairborn, Ohio. I think Fairborn, Ohio. I think was the name of the place, but it was just a whole bunch of—. Well they built houses, apartments for the workers at Air Material Command and at Wright-Patterson with government housing. And they put us up in dormitories and that's where we worked.

Interviewer: Did you share with multiple women? The dormitory?

Fidler: Oh, yeah. Well you could either get a room, get a partner in your room, or get one for yourself.

Interviewer: Did you have to pay anything for it?

Fidler: Yes, we paid but it was subsidized in a way. I don't remember—. That was a real long time ago. I do remember—well now that I think of it, I think that maybe we didn't pay I think the government paid. We had like house mothers in the dormitories. They had it set up and it was in an area where all the housing—the government housing that they had to put up real quick like to get the people there to work. And the people that worked in housing development that we lived in worked for Wright-Patterson and Air Material Command. And there were, like I said, I don't know there were like three hundred of us in a dormitory.

Interviewer: So, what was the etiquette in terms of dating?

Fidler: Well they had a lot of—. The man that I married he had been in World War II. He came home and I had lived—. I had moved out of the dormitories after I had been there for a while and I moved in with a lady and she lived right next to, with an older lady, and she lived right next door to my husband's parents who were living there and working for Wright-Patterson and when he came home from the war I was in the process of moving from that apartment to another apartment with

another with another lady because that one that I was living with was leaving. And his mother told him to help me and that's how I met him. And I met him in February, and we got married in April.

Interviewer: Wow.

Fidler: Huh?

[another person in the room speaks: date in the dorm, indecipherable]

Fidler: Oh yeah, we had house mothers. [makes wheesh sound]

Interviewer: That sounds pretty strict.

Fidler: Well it was up to a point and we abide by them. Went by the rules. We were allowed to go home for the weekend and that kind of stuff. And we were allowed to go out. They didn't—. We went into Dayton. It was like, oh I don't know, 10 miles or 15 miles into Dayton—. Outside of Dayton. And we spent a lot of time in Dayton on the weekends. I don't know what we—. That's where we went. That was the only place close enough to have anything to really do. Well they had in that community, the housing development, that they built for the families—. We were right on the outside of it. They had theatre there for them and they had well like a recreation building and then you met the people that you worked with. They came from every place and there were a lot of military people of course that were working. Other than the fact that the bosses most were military men that we worked for. [coughs]

Interviewer: So, when you came there were you ready to go to work or did you have a training period?

Fidler: No, the training period was when we went to the business school. That was it. And we went from there and, I don't remember exactly, I think I don't remember whether they asked if you wanted to go to Washington DC. Afterwards, I have met some of the same women that were girls the same age that I was that went to Washington to work in the Pentagon and all those places that they have over there. But there's not too many, not the ones that I met, that I know that are still living.

Interviewer: Well tell me about this facility. The Air Material Command. How big was it?

Fidler: Oh, it's huge. I mean well I have no idea. It was—. I have no idea, but it was a huge big place.

Interviewer: How did you get to work every day?

Fidler: I walked because they built the housing development right close, like I said, all we had to do was walk over the railroad tracks. They built the housing development on this side of the railroad tracks and Air Material Command was on the other side of the railroad tracks. But it was a huge big—I mean well it was two stories, but acres, you know, it was a big factory.

Interviewer: And what did you wear?

Fidler: Well whatever we had we wore. There was no dress code. We were not Rosie the Riveters, but we were the paper side of Rosie the Riveter. We were doing the paperwork for the things that Rosie was working on.

Interviewer: Did you typically wear a dress? A skirt or pants?

Fidler: Well I'm thinking back then—. No, we wore skirts and blouses and I don't think they were into jeans and things like the pants back in that era. I remember back in that little town that I grew up in I was the first one to wear overalls. And they were bib overalls. The kind that the fellas wore. They weren't making them for girls yet. They were—. Well I decide that—. Well because I was into—. I had a horse and I rode horses, horse back and I was into a lot of things that girly girls didn't do. I was raised as a tomboy, let's put it that way. Because in the town that I was raised in there was only, my age, there was only like four girls and all the rest of them were boys. I went out and worked in the fields, the corn fields, and I did all kinds of things like that. Well I had a friend one girl friend that did that. And I'm talking about families. One family that lived in that town had twelve children and during the war we had to share a lot of things. And, like I said, I was raised as a tomboy because I went with my dad every place that he went, but I had a nickname. One family called me Tom and my other nickname was Skip and that's what I went through because I—all through growing up I went by my middle name which was Marcelle which was a strange name. Still is a strange name. And I have no idea where it came from. My mother—. I don't know where she found it, someplace. But when I went to business school after high school and when you went to go to work for the government you had to go by your first name which was Paula and middle initial and last name. And so that's how I came with the name that I have now.

Interviewer: So, when you were working at Air Material Command with these other young women you were Paula?

Fidler: I was Paula.

Interviewer: Okay, so in this facility where you went were you in sort of a big office with a lot of desks?

Fidler: Well that depended on who you were working for. They had like steno pools some places and I had a secret clearance. If there was a secret project going on

and after—. If they needed you someplace else sometimes you would be sent there to work for somebody else and then—. Well this was after—. They had a secret project going in St. Louis. This was after the atomic bomb became known. They were making a documentary of the atomic bomb of where it was detonated first and how that came about. And they sent me down to St. Louis to work. It was a secret project because I had a secret clearance, they sent me down there to work. I lived in a hotel. They paid me per diem, and I worked at a vault. I mean a true vault with a big—. It was huge big vault. We worked in there and I took shorthand by flashlight because this was all—. They had recruited people from Hollywood from the film making industry to make this documentary. Like I said it was secret and of course I didn't understand most of it, but that didn't make any difference. They had MPs at the door of the vault. When you wanted to go to the bathroom the MPS escorted you to the restroom and waited outside and then escorted you back to the vault. And we were in that vault 8 hours a day except when you went to the bathroom. Well they did let us out for lunch, and they followed us. They knew where we were, I think every minute of the day. In fact, before I went down to St. Louis for the secret project I had put in for and they were following me at Air Material Command because I had—. There was one captain that he was everywhere. Every time I turned around; he was saying hi to me. He had no business there. I didn't realize at the time, but I finally figured that out.

Interviewer: Why was he doing that?

Fidler: He was studying me to—. This is when I had put in to go to the—. I guess he was making sure I wasn't taking my secret clearance because it was like top secret.

Interviewer: So, he was making sure you were serious?

Fidler: Yeah, that I was serious about that.

Interviewer: When you were in that vault taking shorthand who were you doing that for? Who was there with you?

Fidler: Military. The military people. In fact, I can remember the name of the captain that I worked for. His name was Rune Du Sac(? 0:46:14). We sat there. I sat there. He sat there and I sat here, and he talked and I—. Well as long as they were making the film, like I said, we were in there for most of the time 8 hours a day.

Interviewer: How long did you do this?

Fidler: Now that I'm kind of drawing a blank time wise. It was maybe like 6 weeks. You know something like that.

Interviewer: What else was in the vault?

Fidler: Just the—. Well I don't know. They had papers, but it was filming—. Just the film—. I don't know what else was in the vault. They didn't let me look around too much. They escorted me in there and put me in a chair and that's where I sat.

Interviewer: Did you talk to anybody about it on the outside?

Fidler: Well I suppose that's what they were checking that I didn't do that. Like I said, you know I wouldn't understand—you probably wouldn't understand what they were—a lot of it. I mean I do remember seeing pictures of the Bikini Atoll and where they detonated it and some of that kind of things. But I didn't understand that most of the rest of it.

Interviewer: Did you have any sense of how the information you were gathering was going to be used?

Fidler: Well, I think this was after they had used it. After they had done the Hiroshima one, I think this was after that.

Interviewer: Right. Did you ever see a documentary? Did they ever produce one?

Fidler: Oh, I'm sure they produced it, but I didn't see it. I must of seen part of it while I was in there working. We were there for like 6 weeks I think is what it was, and they finished the documentary and we went back to Air Material Command.

Interviewer: Why don't I ask you a few more questions about Air Material? So, what hours did you work on a day to day basis?

Fidler: The regular hours. I mean like 8-5 or whatever they had going, and we were on—. It was like a regular job.

Interviewer: Did they have a night shift for other workers?

Fidler: Oh, I'm sure they had a night shift, but not for the—. Well they was like 24/7. It was going all the time, but they didn't have a night shift for the clericals, the clerical people. But they had other people and there was a lot of military there and I'm sure each section was headed by a military man of some kind or some rank or something. There were a lot of that. But we just worked—. Well I did work over time sometimes, but that was rarely and I remember that I was working on a Teletype machine and I was filling in for somebody that had taken the day off or wanted to take the day off and asked me to do it for them. When it came across that the war was over, I just happened to be on this particular teletype which we had learned before most of the time it was nothing important. It's just that you had to receive whatever was coming across and you had to get it to whoever was meant for and make sure that they got the thing. I do remember that we had everybody jump up and—. Well it wasn't only my machine that I was working on

I was in a whole—. There was a whole bunch of machines and I'm sure it came across all of them at the same time.

Interviewer: Did the message come through the teletype?

Fidler: Through the teletype machine, yeah. It was—. We worked and we used to have— We had badges that we wore in order to put a little light to the atmosphere we used to paste pictures—. We had to go through a gate to get in and the man at the gate was a military and he was supposed to check everybody's badge, the thing you wore around there, and we used to paste pictures of monkeys and dogs on our badges to tease the people, of course, I was a girl and most of them were fellows, you know to see if they were going to check to make sure you were who you were.

Interviewer: How did the men working there treat you?

Fidler: Very good. I mean we were treated very good. I didn't have any problems. I didn't any problems with any of them except that one that was, I don't know every place I went he was—. If I left my desk, he and went downstairs several times he would be either coming or going up the steps, and I finally got recognized. I mean most of them you know a whole lot of them because there were so many. I mean we're talking about thousands of people in there. You knew the ones that you—. That were in the vicinity of where you worked.

Interviewer: So, there were men and women, were there African Americans working there at this place?

Fidler: Well now I don't know about that. I didn't know any. Well I don't know how to put that because I don't remember any women, or girls, we were girls, and I don't remember any African American girls in that bunch or in the bunch or in the dormitories. Now there wasn't just one dormitory there were five dormitories. I knew one bunch they came from Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, and the only I knew that about her was that she happened to live not in my dorm but in the next dorm, but she—. One day she was going and we had a short cut that we used to catch the, and of course nobody cars or anything like that and we used to catch the bus to go into Dayton, Ohio, and we had a short cut that crossed the railroad tracks and it was out beside one of the dorms and she lived in the dorm next to me and she was taking the short cut to go to get the bus and she got hit by a train. Killed her. She was from Sault Ste. Marie and that—. So, that's the only—. And I don't remember any blac—African Americans.

Interviewer: Okay, so you said at one point you were operating a teletype machine? Were there other machines that you operated? What were your daily duties?

Fidler: Well, my daily duties were typing shorthand, filing, making coffee, and—. [laughs] Doing that strictly what we did. It was strictly secretarial, and you just

did the day's work whatever came in and whatever they wanted you to do that's what we did. Whatever was going.

Interviewer: How much money did you make?

Fidler: Oh, I have no idea. I did—. I should of kept that. I saw one of my pay slips the other day some place. I don't know.

Interviewer: Did it seem like a lot to you at the time?

Fidler: Well, yeah. Oh, sure it seemed like a lot because, like I said, I didn't live in a big city and my dad worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad and he was a machinist and he made—. And that was a good paying job. There were a lot of people in that area that didn't—. Well it was during the depression they didn't have much to do and we shared a lot. We grew our own. We had vegetable gardens, well that was normal anyway and we did canning and we shared with what we had. I can remember when I was growing up. I went over and they had some people, oh, I guess it must of been about eight miles from us, I walked over there and picked strawberries and I think I made something like maybe two cents a pint. That was when I was growing up. And so, you know nobody—. Well I went to work for a department store that was over in Bowerston where I went to school like when I was fourteen and I worked there and I worked in the shoe department and I worked in the grocery department and that was big and I have no idea. I probably made fifty cents an hour or something like that. [laughs]

Interviewer: You consistently were working?

Fidler: Yeah, I tried to keep, but this was not having much else to do. Like I said, I was raised in a town with all boys, so I learned to play marbles and I learned to do all the things that the fellas did. Now I had a horse that I did horseback riding, not in any capacity other than to entertain myself, and I worked in the corn fields and I hoed, and I did all of that kind of stuff.

Interviewer: Well when you were working at Air Material, did you have much communication with your family? Did you correspond with them?

Fidler: Well, yeah because it wasn't very far away and like I said I still had passes, so I could jump in the train. I could get on the train and I could go home for the weekend but back then at that age you, unless it was a holiday, didn't want to go home because there was nothing there to do when you could go to Dayton, Ohio. [laughs]

Interviewer: There was more fun?

Fidler: There was. We didn't have theatres in the town that I lived in. You still had to go like eighteen miles to go to the movie because there was nothing. They had

been—. My grandfather owned a little store there, way back, and I'm talking about way back. You know, way back but the thing is I don't remember. I remember some of the stuff—. I know I remember where it was, but it was not in action at the time. You know not working at the time and that was when I was little. I can remember things that I did when I was like three years old. I have a pretty good memory.

Interviewer: Well let's transition to the time when you finished working in St. Louis.

Fidler: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, so this is after the war and you returned to—.

Fidler: Air Material.

Interviewer: Air Material. You told me about meeting your future husband.

Fidler: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, ya'll married fairly quickly after you met.

Fidler: Yeah, and he was on his way back. He had just returned from WWII.

Interviewer: Where did he serve?

Fidler: He was in a 101st Airborne and he had jumped in D-Day and all of those other places. He went from jumping in D-Day and he ended up in Austria, so he went through France. That's where he ended up. It was in Austria and then he came home, and he had already signed up to go back to Europe. I met him and, like I said, we met in February and we got married in New Jersey and he was on his way back to Europe when we got married, so I left him when we got married, and I left and came back to Air Material Command and he went back to Austria.

Interviewer: So, tell me about the wedding.

Fidler: There was no wedding. We got married by a justice—. Well I take that back he was a preacher, but it was like a justice of the peace type thing. Only had one—. We had one of his buddies and the buddy's wife and that all was there. We eloped. That's what we did. Well I did.

Interviewer: Why did you elope?

Fidler: Well because he was on his way back to Austria. He was on his way back to Europe.

Interviewer: Why did you feel it was necessary to get married before he went back to Europe?

Fidler: We just decided that's what we wanted to do.

Interviewer: And then you returned to Ohio?

Fidler: Yeah, I went back to Air Material Command.

Interviewer: Okay and continued working there.

Fidler: Until he put in. He went back to Austria. He put in for me to meet up with him over there. He was a—. Well the army backed him. I don't know I've been through this army. Anyway, he put in for me to come to Austria to be with him, and the army sent me over there in August of '46. Yeah, we got married in April then in August I went back—. I went to Austria to join him, and, like I said, the army was not really prepared for dependents, but I wasn't the only one. We lived in a small air base because my husband was a—. I said he was a, by that time, sergeant, I guess. No, corporal. Corporal or sergeant. I forget which it was, but, anyway, he was a—. It was a small air base in Austria, Herrshing, and we lived in houses that—. Apartments that had coal briquettes they used to heat the water and heat the—. We had no furnaces and we did have electricity, but they turned it off every night at 10:00 o'clock and regrouped it and I don't remember when it came back on like early in the morning and—. Wasn't the best living, but, like I said, I survived, and it was good enough.

Interviewer: How long did you live there?

Fidler: We were there for—. We were there for a year and or a little more than a year. I came home—. We came home in September '47 and Pam was born in November of '47. Then he went back to—. We went back to Germany when—. Let's see. We were home. Then we were at—. Oh, he went, my husband, went to—. We were at Fort Bragg and he went to OCS¹ and I went back to Ohio from Fort Bragg. And then he graduated from OCS in November of '48 and my son was born in November of '48. He didn't graduate until December I think it was. We were back in Ohio. Anyway, they put in to go to Germany and we went back to Germany and I took the two kids.

Interviewer: How did you feel about going to Germany with your young children?

Fidler: Ah, [shrugs shoulders] I guess I was a born traveler, but, like I said, now I had been to the West Coast two or three times by train and other people were not traveling like that, so it was kind of, you know—. I guess I'm a bit of an adventurer or something like that. Anyway, I went.

Interviewer: Where did you live in Germany?

¹ Officer Candidate School

Fidler: Well we were in Austria for a year and we came home, and we were home for a year, I think, and we went back to Germany. We lived—. We started out in Hanau which was an Engineer depot because that was when my husband graduated from OCS. He was an engineer for Corps of Engineers, and we were in Germany at Hanau and that's when I went back to work for the government and there again, I had a secret clearance. I got passed around a little bit because whenever they needed—. They were going to do something secret I would go. I would work for the commanding officer or whoever was doing the secret business that they were and especially they transferred. They were transferring the whole military business across the Rhine down to K Town which was Kaiserslautern and I worked on that because it was supposed to be a big secret that they were going to move the—. Because the Hanau was close to Heidelberg—. Or not Heidelberg.

Woman: Berlin?

Fidler: Hm?

Woman: Berlin?

Fidler: No, no, no, no. Ah, it'll come to me, but—. Anyway, they were moving the Engineer Depot from Hanau down to Kaiserslautern and then we moved down to Kaiserslautern and I worked down there for a while and then we came home. And we were home for two years, and when we came home from there, we were in San Francisco stationed at Fort Mason in San Francisco. We were home for two years in San Francisco and we left there and went to Japan. And we left Japan, we were there in Japan for two years, and we came home, [chuckles] and we were in Oklahoma at Fort Sill and my husband was working at Fort Sill and we were there for two years. When he was working there, he was down—. He would go off for a month down to Mexico and he was working on the Red Stone. He was making liquid oxygen for the Red Stone missile that was when they were first doing it. The missile business. We were there at Fort Sill for two years, and we left there and went to Taiwan.

Interviewer: The whole family?

Fidler: The whole family. I dragged them along every place I went.

Interviewer: So, were your children starting school overseas?

Fidler: Yeah, let's see. Pam was the oldest, so she was in school in Germany, I guess is where she started. I think. Germany, she started. They always had dependent school wherever we went, you know, so I didn't worry about that. And we went from Taiwan—. We were in Taiwan for two years. Well we were in Germany, the first time we were in Germany, we were there for three years and then the other ones were all two—year tours. We went from Taiwan—. We came home and—. Where'd I say we went to?

Woman: Norman.

Fidler: Where?

Woman: Norman.

Fidler: Oh, went to Fort Sill.

Woman: No, Norman.

Fidler: Oh, Norman. We went to Norman, Oklahoma. That's it. That's where the University was and from there we went to Korea, or my husband went on a short tour by himself for a year and then came home and then we went to Korea and we were in Korea for two years and my son graduated from high school in Korea. Pam didn't get to graduate from high school.

Woman: I did graduate.

Fidler: [laughs] She did graduate, but they let her do her end of the senior semester early because we were going to—. We left and went to—. Where were we—?

Woman: Korea.

Fidler: Korea in February, and they let her do her work ahead, so she could graduate.

Interviewer: I see.

Fidler: Because she—. Well she stayed—. You stayed—. No, you didn't stay behind. They let her graduate and we all went to Korea and we were in Korea for two years and then we came home. And we decided that was enough.

Interviewer: Well, Mrs. Fidler, tell me how you ended up in Georgia.

Fidler: [laughs] Well, we came back. My husband retired. We went back to Norman, Oklahoma where the university is. Both of the children graduated from OU. Went to school there and graduated from there. And we went back there and he started—. Well we liked Oklahoma. We had bought a house there before when we had been there before, but we still didn't have it. We went back to Norman and he was—. Well he had been with the district when we were in Norman and then we went to Fort Leonard Wood. Huh? Yeah, Fort Leonard Wood. Then he retired from Fort Leonard Wood and went back to Norman. And his commanding officer that he had had retired and came to Georgia to work for Rich's and when my husband retired, Marshal Saws was his name, and he, Marshal, got in contact with my husband and asked him to come to Georgia to work for Rich's. In there. They were expanding. They were building stores and other parts and they built one in

South Carolina and one in Georgia. Oh, they had them all—. Several of them anyway. That was what my husband was—. That was how we got to Georgia.

Interviewer: What did you think about the south?

Fidler: Mhmm. My theory is [laughs] and my theory when we were moving to all these places was that if those people could live there I could live there. Because I'm not any better than anybody else, so that's the same and I thought I had not been in the south. But I figured, you know, I'll get along with the—. I got along with most everybody. If I could get along with all those foreign people, I guess I could get along with the southerners. I didn't really agree with a lot of them. I get along with them. I had had my—. One of my grandparents, great grandparents, had been in Florida way back way over on the coast. But I didn't—. Well I knew him vaguely but not very much and—. It was something new and I could do that. I could—. I survived. I'm still here.

Interviewer: Well I wanted to ask you one more question to finish up. What is your war time service, in your words, what does that mean to you now? Why are you wanting to share it?

Fidler: Well, I think, like I said, that I can only speak for my group, but there was, you know, thousands of—. And I met some from different areas like I knew some from the south that ended up, and women I'm talking about girls, and they went to work for up at the Pentagon or up in Washington DC and I met some from Wisconsin and I thought—. Oh, we were working just as, well maybe not as hard as Rosie the Riveter, but—. And they were all taken away from their families. You know, left home, so to speak, to work at these and I think that it was equally as important as Rosie the Riveter.

Interviewer: Wonderful. Well thank you so much Mrs. Fidler.

Fidler: Okay.